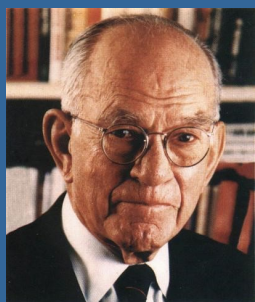


# Chào FULBRIGHT!

Quarterly Newsletter Summer & Fall 2018



*"Perhaps the greatest power of such intellectual exchange is to convert nations into peoples and to translate ideologies into human aspirations"*  
-- J. William Fulbright

## From the Director

Dear Fulbrighters and friends,

In this issue, we highlighted the activities that span from summer to fall, the busiest months for the Fulbright Vietnam Team.

We had a productive season with American Fulbrighters completing their grants in Vietnam, Vietnamese Fulbrighters starting their new journeys in the United States this fall, and welcoming American Fulbrighters to Vietnam to serve as scholars, English teaching assistants, and researchers. We also successfully selected candidates for the Vietnamese Student Program and

Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program for academic year 2019. Our appreciation goes out to all Fulbrighters who contributed time and effort to read applications, interview candidates, speak at the orientations, and host English Teaching Assistants. In this issue, we will meet with scholars of the Vietnam program and U.S. program academic year 2018. We will continue to introduce our English Teaching Assistants in the upcoming issue.

As a final note, I would like to thank those who shared your stories, articles, and photos with

the Fulbright community. As always, we hope you will enjoy reading the newsletter and keep sending us your updates so we can feature your achievements in the upcoming issues of the Fulbright Newsletter.

Warm regards,

Vu Quynh Nga & the Fulbright Vietnam Team

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## Thank you and Best Wishes to Hoang Ha



October 12, 2018 marked the final day Ha Hoang worked for the Fulbright Program. She left to start another chapter of her career at USAID.

Ha, a remarkable colleague and friend, spent over four and a half years working with us. Dur-

ing her time with us, she made a big difference in the Fulbright Office, especially when it comes to budget and supporting the Fulbrighters.

Ha processed thousands of grants for both American and Vietnamese Fulbrighters, prepared hundreds of travel authorizations for staff, worked on a numerous purchase orders for events, souvenirs, and promotional items. With attention to detail and big-picture strategy, she contributed significantly to the important work of the Fulbright Office in Vietnam. She is active, cheerful, productive, industrious, honest, friendly, reliable, resourceful, talented, loyal, and self-discipline. As a high achiever, Ha worked hard and tirelessly to deliver excellent results. She always got the done

perfectly and without any delay. She's someone who is always willing to assist other colleagues in every task, be it big like coordinating an event, budgeting a program, contacting the vendors or small like photocopying the applications, scanning materials, and delivering email.

We are proud to have called Ha a friend and colleague. Her contributions towards the success of the Fulbright Program will stay in our hearts forever. While we celebrate this bitter-sweet moment of her leaving and next endeavor, we will always remember the sweet memories of working with her.

Let's join Fulbright team to wish Ha good luck and all the best in her new position!

## In-country Orientation for ETAs AY 2018 - 2019

**August 6-31, 2018:** Seventeen English Teaching Assistants gathered in Hanoi for a one-month orientation before heading to their host institutions. The orientation provided the ETAs with practical information to help them maximize their time and experience in Vietnam.



During the orientation, ETAs were briefed on medical, political, economic and security issues in Vietnam, as well as Vietnamese culture, history, economy and education by the officers from the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and Fulbright Alumni. ETAs also received training on basic Vietnamese language and teaching methodology from experienced instructors. After the orientation, ETAs are ready to embark on their nine-month journey as teaching assistants and Fulbright cultural ambassadors at the host institutions.

## Fulbrighters Get-Together

Consul General Mary Tarnowka and Molly Stephenson, the Public Affairs Officer for U.S. Embassy Hanoi, hosted a reception for Fulbright alumni on September 13. Tarnowka and Stephenson commended the alumni's efforts in broadening and strengthening the U.S.-Vietnam relations since the establishment of the program in Vietnam in 1992. Nearly 60 alumni and current grantees of all Fulbright programs shared a night of friendship and reconnecting.



## Pre-departure Orientation for Vietnamese

Twenty-six Fulbright Vietnamese Scholars, Students, and Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTAs) gathered in Hanoi from June 8 to 11 for a pre-departure orientation before they embark on their Fulbright journey in the United States this fall.



*Counselor for Public Affairs Molly Stephenson opens the PDO and briefs on the U.S.-Vietnam Relations*

The Public Diplomacy Office provided outgoing grantees with the necessary information to facilitate a smooth departure and arrival in the United States. They received briefings on political, economic, security, and health issues from the U.S. Officers to get a sense of what's happening in the United States today. Fulbright U.S. Scholars and alumni also shared with them the tips for academic success and cultural adaptation, and how to make the most of their time in the United States.

The 2018 cohort— an outstanding group of dynamic individuals— participated in a very rigorous competition to win this Fulbright scholarship.



*Group bike tour to Van Long to raise awareness of environmental protection*



*Tips for academic success*



*Understand the U.S. culture*



*Alumni share experiences*



*Reception hosted by Deputy Chief of Mission Caryn McClelland*



## Vietnamese Scholars to the U.S. AY2018-2019

**Dr. Hoang Thi Dieu Thuy** has been

working as a lecturer at the University of Economics—Hue University since 2004. Her research interest focuses on tourism destination management, sustainable tourism and cultural tourism. As a Fulbright Scholar, Thuy is working with researchers at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to undertake a project on tourism destination image of Vietnam perceived by U.S. residents.



**Dr. Hang Nguyen** is currently a Fulbright



Visiting Scholar with the Cornell University Southeast Asia Program. She is a lecturer at the Faculty of International Politics

and Diplomacy of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam. Her research interests are U.S.-Vietnam relations, U.S.-EU relations, the Asia-Pacific region, and foreign policy analysis. She has published in well-regarded journals, including Orbis: Foreign Policy Research Institute's Journal of World Affairs, Asian Affairs: An American Review, Portuguese Journal of Political Science, Malaysian Journal of International Relations, Global Change, Peace and Security, Indian Journal of Asian Affairs, and Asian Journal of Public Affairs.

**Dr. Dang Minh**

**Hieu** earned his first degree in Biotechnology from Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST). After completing his PhD degree in



Biotechnology at Osaka University in 2009, Dang returned to Hanoi and has been serving as a lecturer at HUST. As a Fulbright Vietnamese Scholar, Dang is currently working at the University of Montana, Missoula, where he is pursuing a research on the environmental impacts of iron oxide nanoparticles in soil. Dang enjoys beautiful landscapes and nature of Montana, various seminars and outdoor activities geared towards the understanding of the environment and ecosystems.

**Dr. Tran Thi Thanh Hue** is a lecturer at An Giang University. She started her enjoyable journey as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the Quality Teaching for English Learners Initiative at WestEd, San Francisco in September 2018. Her research explores best practices in enhancing teacher expertise in English Language Teaching in the United States and its implications for EFL teacher education in Vietnam. She looks forward to meaningful opportunities to build upon this precious experience in her administrative work, teaching, research, and community outreach when returning to Vietnam.



**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tran Thi Thanh Tu** is currently Dean of Faculty of Finance and Banking, University of Economics and Business, Vietnam National University in Hanoi. She has nearly 20 years

working experience in finance and banking. Dr. Tu has been selected as a Fulbright U.S. – ASEAN visiting scholar AY 2018 - 2019. She conducts the research entitled



“Bank Governance – U.S. Experience after Global Financial Crisis and Lessons Learnt for ASEAN Countries” at University of Massachusetts Lowell. She hopes that during this four-month research period, she will contribute for the future development of collaborations between American and Vietnamese Universities in research as well as in education.

**Dang Minh Tuan**

is Associate Professor and Deputy Director of the Constitutional and Administrative Law Department under the Vietnam National University



School of Law, Hanoi. His research is focused on Asian comparative constitutional law, judicial review, and separation of power. He received a Fulbright Visiting Scholar Grant to do a research project from September 2018 to June 2019 in the Clough Center for the Study of Constitutional Democracy at Boston College Law School. The topic of the research is about “The Adaptation of American Judicial Review in Civil Law Systems and Some Lessons Learnt for Vietnam.”

**Dr. Ngo Thi Hang Nga** was born and grew up in Son La province in the Northwest region of Vietnam. She has been working at Tay Bac University since 2002. Her research interests bridge the areas of Language, Culture, Disadvantaged students, and Teachers' Resilience. Her current research under the Fulbright Vietnamese Scholar at Stanford University focuses on

the challenges that ethnic minority students face in their higher education. She is excited for the opportunity to learn about the people and cultures of the United States.



## Fulbright Vietnamese Students and FLTAs AY2018

No.	Name	Field of study	U.S. University	Current job	Current employer	Current City/Province
1	Chu Thi Huong	Public Health	Univeristy of Washington	Lecturer/ Family Doctor	Thai Nguyen University of Medicine and Pharmacy	Thai Nguyen
2	Dang Quang Tam	Language Teaching	St. Michaels College	Teacher of English	Ly Nhat Quang Junior High School, Do Luong	Nghe An
3	Do Manh Hoang	International Affairs	George Washington University	Officer/Researcher	Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam/Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Hanoi
4	Ha Anh Vu	Global Affairs	Yale University	Diplomat	Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Hanoi
5	Le Vu Hai	Data Science	University of San Francisco	N/A	N/A	Son La
6	Luong The Huy	Law & Sexuality	University of California, Los Angeles	Advocacy Advisor	Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE)	Ho Chi Minh City
7	Nguyen Duc Diem Quynh	Arts	University of Tennessee--Knoxville	FF&E Interior Designer	DWP Design Worldwide Partnership	Hanoi
8	Nguyen Huong Linh	Arts Therapy	School of Visual Arts	Art Facilitator, Book Writer, Designer	Self-Employed	Hanoi
9	Nguyen Ngoc Thanh	Horticulture	Iowa State University	Community Development Officer	Desert Flower - Sunny Farm Vietnam	Hanoi
10	Nguyen Thi Van	Law	Fordham University - School of Law	Lawyer	FL Vietnam Law LLC	Binh Duong
11	Nguyen Tuan Anh	Public Health	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Research Officer	Marie Stopes Vietnam	Ho Chi Minh City
12	Pham Huynh Phu Quy	Language Teaching	Michigan State University	Instructor of English	Ho Chi Minh city University of Education Foreign Language Center	Ho Chi Minh City
13	Pham Thi Hong Ngoc	Early Intervention	University of Oregon	Lecturer	Department of Special Education, Ho Chi Minh City U. of Education	Ho Chi Minh City
14	Quach Canh Toan	Journalism	University of Missouri-Columbia	Reporter	Zing Online Newspaper	Ho Chi Minh City
15	Tran Thi Thuy Trang	Education	New York University	CEO	Domino Education	Hanoi
16	Vo Van Nhat Han	International Development	Clark University	Trade Officer	The Embassy of Israel in Vietnam	Ho Chi Minh City
17	Dang Thi Nhu Quynh	Language Teaching FLTA	University of Hawaii at Manoa	English teacher	The Olympia School	Hanoi
18	Huynh Gia Bao	Language Teaching FLTA	University of Wisconsin - Madison	English teacher	Star Education	Ho Chi Minh City
19	Nguyen Thi Quy	Language Teaching FLTA	N/A	English teacher	VNU-HN University of Foreign Language and International Studies	Hanoi

## U.S. Scholars and Students to Vietnam Fall AY2018-2019

**Eric L. Krakauer** received a PhD in philosophy and MD from Yale University, trained in internal medicine at Yale-New Haven Hospital, and completed fellowships in general internal medicine and in medical



ethics at Harvard Medical School. Currently, he is Associate Professor of Medicine and of Global Health & Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School and a practicing palliative medicine specialist at Massachusetts General Hospital, where he also directs the Global Palliative Care Program. In 2002, he founded the Vietnam-CDC-Harvard Medical School AIDS Partnership (now called HAIVN) that trained hundreds of Vietnamese doctors and nurses in HIV/AIDS care and treatment. Over the past 12 years, he has provided training and technical assistance for the Ministries of Health, major hospitals, medical schools, and colleagues in Vietnam and other low and middle income countries to help integrate palliative care into public health care systems and health care education. Recently, he served as Medical Officer for Palliative Care at the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Switzerland, on the Lancet Commission on Palliative Care, and on the Board of Directors of the International Association for Hospice & Palliative Care. Currently, he is assisting the University of Medicine & Pharmacy at Ho Chi Minh City to establish one of the first academic departments of palliative care and palliative care sub-specialist training programs in the developing world.

**Dr. Miriam Komaromy** is a physician and professor of medicine at the University of New Mexico in the United States, where she is a specialist in Internal Medicine and Addiction Medicine. Much of her work in recent years has focused on use of the ECHO

model, an approach to expand access to specialized medical care by using video-conferencing to connect specialists and primary care teams for mentorship and case-based learning. She has been an Associate Director in the ECHO Institute, leading ECHO programs that are focused on treatment of substance use disorders for the past 13 years. She consults with programs around the world on implementation of the ECHO model to expand access to specialized medical care. She particularly focuses on ECHO for addictions, mental health, care of com-



plex populations, and ECHO programs to support community health workers. Miriam is a member of the board of directors of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), the largest addiction-specialty society in the United States, where she chairs the ASAM's Fundamentals of Addiction committee. She was recently elected ASAM educator of the year for 2019. As a Fulbright Scholar, Miriam is working at Hanoi Medical University, performing research and assisting with education on treatment of substance use disorders. Miriam's spouse, Julie Rosen, a clinical social worker who focuses on treatment of trauma, has accompanied her to Hanoi and is volunteering with Blue Dragon and with the University of Labor and Social Work.

**Paul B. Jantz** is teaching about the brain at the Vietnam National University of Hanoi, University of Social Sciences & Humanities, Faculty of Psychology and assisting them as they develop two master's degree training programs. He is a 10-month Fulbright U.S. Scholar. His permanent position is at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, where he is a tenured Associate Professor

and Program Coordinator for the School Psychology Program. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Northern Colorado and his research is in the area of moderate and severe pediatric traumatic brain injury (TBI). Paul has co-authored a book on pediatric TBI and published numerous articles on TBI in peer-reviewed journals. In Vietnam, in addition to teaching, Paul is presenting seminars and workshops on the biomechanics of TBI and the neurological outcomes of TBI. He is also conducting research on the relationship between road traffic accidents in Vietnam, motorbike helmet use in children under the age of six, and TBI. Paul is loving his time in Vietnam, especially the warmth and friendliness of its people. He enjoys trying new Vietnamese dishes and recently ate snails steeped in lemon grass. So far, his favorite Vietnamese dish is Bún chả.



**Eric Ardman** has never had an epiphany in his life. "I just shrug my shoulders and roll with it," he replies while squatting on his little blue plastic stool, yawning. "No 'big bangs.' If I find something interesting, I just keep at it, little by little." Whether it's deciding to study medicine at the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine or choosing to learn Vietnamese as an undergraduate at the same institution, he can never quite pinpoint from where he gets these ideas to do what he does. This time in Vietnam, his 5<sup>th</sup> in six years, Eric is working with Hanoi Medical University to survey the student body about their attitudes, knowledge, and perceptions of their LGBTQ patients; with the results of



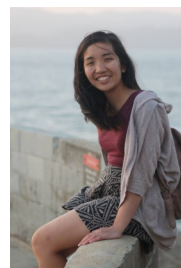
the survey, he will be creating module to be added to the school's curriculum that will engage students in discussions on LGBTQ-related topics, such as mental health, sexuality, sensitivity as a healthcare provider when treating LGBTQ patients. The project stems from the previous work with the LGBTQ community he did two years ago while interning at the Center for Supporting Community Development Initiatives (SCDI). "I'm happy to be back in Vietnam. It's nice to be in a position where I cooperate with established organizations and try my best to contribute to improving the community. But it's not a one way street; I learn a lot in return. Học, Học nữa, học mãi!"

**Jennifer Mathis Alexander** received her Bachelors' degrees in environmental engineering and Chinese Language & East Asian Literature from the University of Georgia. She previously worked as an environmental engineer in Athens, Georgia, and as an English language teacher in Stockholm, Sweden. She became aware of the complex environmental issues that pervade much of East Asia as a result of its exponential population and economic growth during the year



she spent in China learning Mandarin working as an English translator and experiencing authentic day-to-day living with host families. Jennifer will spend her Fulbright year based in HCMC, Vietnam working with and learning from independent solid waste collectors, collecting geospatial data on waste collection coverage, and tracking how waste and potential recyclable materials move through the city. She hopes to learn how the locals view their waste management and its issues, and to support the people of HCMC with an approach that is respectful of their ways of living by carefully examining what matters to people on a local level. Her love of adventure and her experiences in China and Sweden sparked her interest in becoming an environmental engineer; experiencing different lifestyles and norms alongside complicated and unsightly environmental problems in two different corners of the world led Jennifer to pursue a career path that would help to support our global and local environments. When she completes her Fulbright year, Jennifer plans to pursue her doctoral degree in environmental engineering and continue her research of waste management strategies and plastic pollution issues.

"Hi there! My name is **Thu Dao** and I was



born and raised in Richmond, Virginia. Growing up in a Vietnamese American family, I ate the delicious food, spoke a basic level of the language, and heard stories about this country, but a part of me has always been searching to understand this culture at a deeper level. I graduated from Georgetown University with a Bachelor of Science in International Health, where I studied the social and structural determinants of health, including health systems, political economy, environment and culture, as they relate to health outcomes and inequities. Through the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, I have an amazing opportunity to collaborate with the Hanoi University of Public Health to expand upon this knowledge and carry out a mixed-methods research project. I will be looking at the sociocultural influences and systemic factors that are affecting the rising rates of non-medically necessary cesarean section in Viet Nam through surveys and semi-structured interviews. I am incredibly excited and grateful for this opportunity to be in the field, listen of the stories of people, and contribute to the area of reproductive health in Viet Nam."

## Tributes to Dr. Michelle McCollin



Our shared mourning over the death of vibrant Fulbright Scholar Dr. Michelle McCollin got us thinking about how to live a life

of full inspirations, motivations and compassion. During a semester in Vietnam, Michelle did a dozen of seminars, workshops, talks, and presentations on Inclusive Education. She was hosted by the Hanoi National University of Education, and traveled to many other institutions in Vietnam and in the region. Her events were well attended by hundreds of people,

exclusive online live stream audiences averaged between 8,000 - 17,000.

Michelle touched so many lives in Vietnam,



and beyond. Her passion for life, compassion for others, and inspiring, motivating message will resonate for decades to come.

Michelle took the opportunities to travel, build cross-cultural understandings, and engage with people from various countries and communities. In one of her last writings to the Fulbright Program in Vietnam, she shared "...It was an amazing experience. And the one thing I learned was reinforced to me is that *"we are more alike than are different"*.

Michelle, thank you for bringing out the best in all of us. You will be missed.

(To celebrate the life of this amazing person, her friend established a memorial Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Dr-Michelle-McCollin-Celebration-Of-Life-298196737620997/>)

# The Excitement of Creating a New Major in Commercial Music

by Fulbright Specialist Michael Zager

Upon entering the Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music in Ho Chi Minh City,



Vietnam, I experienced a cacophony of sound emanating from both western and traditional Vietnamese instruments. Sounds coming from the recital hall, the classrooms, and the walkways, most of which are outside and three stories high. Wow! The excitement began my first day as a Fulbright Specialist. Since music is the universal language, there was no language barrier; yes, I had translators, but we all spoke “music.”

My goal was to help the Conservatory design a new major in commercial music. In my opinion, all music is commercial. Clas-

sical musicians perform and record, composers write music to be performed and recorded, pop artists create, record, and market new music.

Musical isolation ended years ago. In today’s commercial music environment, whether composing film music, writing music for commercials, or recording albums, all musicians have to understand music production, recording techniques and create, at the least, “mockups” (demos) in a computer-music sequencing program called a Digital Audio Workstation, commonly known as a DAW. Many pop artists create final master recordings.

In 2002, I designed the Commercial Music major (Department of Music) at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. Therefore, my curriculum suggestions are partially based upon our major.

I presented lectures about music production, composing film music, composing and arranging music for commercials and new media, workshops on mixing, which is a synthesis of arranging and the creative use of audio technology.

Rehearsing student bands to record was exhilarating. Many of the students recorded



for the first time; to experience the students’ excitement and enthusiasm was worth the effort.

The Conservatory will also create a student-run, faculty-supervised record label called 112 Recordings. The label offers students the opportunity to apply what they learn in the classroom, which includes music production, sound recording, performing, composition, arranging, marketing, and promotion. This requires instruction, and faculty-supervised workshops by people with extensive, professional music industry experience.

None of this could be accomplished without the support of the extraordinary faculty and staff at the Conservatory. They are professional, helpful, and enthusiastic about tackling the creation of a new major. It is also rewarding to have the complete backing from Dr. Tạ Quang Đông, Director of the Conservatory.

The Fulbright Mission is “...to increase understanding between the people of the United States and the people of the other countries.” In my opinion, first **mission accomplished** with more music to come!



## Indescribable Vietnam in Me (Macy Tran, ETA)



*How was Viet Nam?* A question I'm dreading. How do I begin to articulate the intangibility of precious, fleeting moments? The feeling of wind brushing your hair as you glide on a motorbike around your city, making you question what you've been doing these past 23 years if not feeling life through every cell in your body. The bubbling anticipation before it rains at Vo-vinam practice—feeling the raindrops kiss my skin seconds before the monsoon pours and everyone laughs, grabs their helmet, and runs for cover, children itching to *tắm mưa* as the rain hits the concrete in a rhythm that runs in Vietnamese peoples'

blood. Right afterwards driving home laughing to myself, waddling in a rain poncho with wet feet dipped in flooded streets. The feeling of late night milk tea and card games while gossiping with my students, our giggles mixed with the whirring cicadas outside. The smell of a Mekong morning—incense smoke swirling with dew. The swell of pride and love growing deep in my belly as my students orchestrate a brilliant and creative presentation and then later that night put on an impressive performance, singing and/or dancing in front of hundreds of people. The sound when people



mix their *cà phê sữa*; ice clinking with glass against a backdrop of honking horns and friends catching up on plastic stools. The taste of the perfect *cơm sườn* after a long



day; the steam of hot rice in your face, fish sauce bright and pungent, the smell of smoked meat thick in the air. The music of a good ol' Vietnamese celebration-- *Một, hai, ba, VỐ!* Bouncing against bubbling hot pot broth and grandfathers singing karaoke, songs spilling onto the street. The lost and found feeling of meeting my family for the first time since I was four years old,



incense sticks humming between my hands as I spoke to the sacrifices at the alters of my deceased relatives, offering oaths of gratitude and eternal courage and love. The endless tears, selfies, group hugs, and thank-yous; students and friends singing good-bye songs, wiping away my tears and holding my hands as we parted ways. The tenderness of leaving a home, making my heart ache after it realizes how much it has grown this past year . *How was Viet Nam?* It was indescribable. You had to be there.

## How far will you go?

*A story of wondrous experiences told by Quynh Dang, a Vietnamese Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant now living in Hawaii.*

Early Friday morning in May 2018, my phone's vibration notified a new email showing the subject "Academic TOA". With a palpitating heart, I trembly opened the attachment. Believe it or not, I am going to Hawaii.



*International FLTAs, 2018 - 2019, attended Summer Orientation at Michigan State University. Photo credit: a MSU staff*

### Let's get ready for our departure!

In an event organized by the U.S. Embassy in Vietnam, Fulbrighters of different programs including Student Program, Visiting Scholars Program, and the FLTA had the opportunity to meet and greet each other in the Pre-Departure Orientation. We engaged in a variety of talks about the academic life, culture difference, and essential preparation for our stay in the United States. By the end of the orientation, the outing trip brought Fulbrighters together as a family and beautifully wrapped up our Pre-Departure Orientation with an inspiring message "Once Fulbrighter, Forever Fulbrighter". We were then all set for the incoming trip.

### Welcome to America!

It took me three flights to finally arrive in Michigan, where our Summer Orientation was hosted. Once I landed, I was greeted by students and staff from Michigan State University with the warmest and gleeful welcomes. The next four days in the Orientation united FLTAs from almost all over the world and helped us to better under-

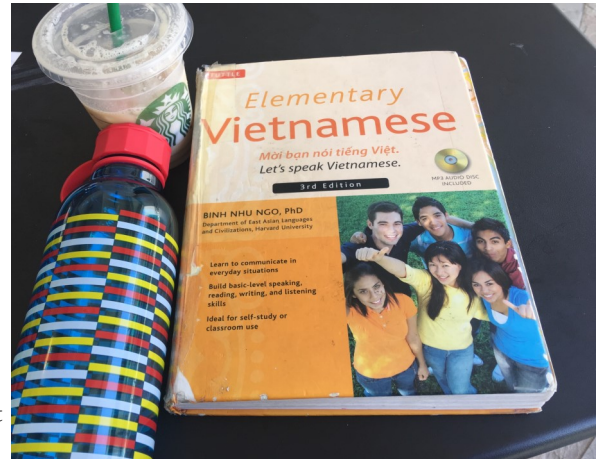
stand the context of living and studying in American Universities. For me, the biggest take-away from the orientation was the friendships formed with other FLTAs. We spent time together during meals, discussions, activities, and exchanged conversations on all sorts of topics. I would never forget the lively talks about cultural customs from Russian, Mexican, Bahrain, and Nigerian Fulbrighters, while the game night left us with laughs and interesting memories. From Michigan, we would be heading to different directions, yet we are now connected to each other through the FLTAs community.

### Aloha! You are in Hawaii.

In Hawaii, receiving a lei is an honor and a blessing. I received an orchid lei from my supervisor when I first arrived in the Honolulu Airport. Ever since, everyday living



and working on this splendid island is a delightful day. For the first time in my life, I officially teach my native language, Vietnamese. I take it as a great pride as well as a big responsibility. I remember my first lesson was about the Vietnamese Alphabet. As I unfolded all the letters with my students, I reckoned that I was actually learning my language again. When the days have gone by, I have discovered a little more



*Teaching Vietnamese in Hawaii, 2018 - 2019, learning and re-learning my own native language.*

about my own language and loved to share it with my students in classes.

It is not exaggerated to claim that Hawaii is a paradise on earth, blessed with spectacular sceneries, pleasant weather, mouth-watering food, and unforgettable sunsets by the sea. My Fulbright experience is not only bounded the lectures in classes, but fulfilled with buoyant activities and great time with friends. Sharing my daily life with other international students in Shinshukyokai Dormitory, I have immersed in a multi-cultural circle, where each member has unique colors. We are thrilled every dinner time when the table is full of food from Asia to Europe. Beaches are our energizing dose, and sunset is a soul-nurturing capsule. When I lie on the beach next to my friends and watch the sun goes down, my heart is filled with love and gratitude. I do not know how far I will go. Yet, I know that I am so far so fortunate to embark on this Fulbright journey, to meet people from all walks of life, and to make my everyday memorable.

How about you? How far will you go?

## “Vietnamese lessons: Looking forward”

By Dr. Miriam Komaromy

Black and white pictures on the evening television news shows when I was a child were my introduction to the war in Vietnam. I remember my mother trying to answer my



questions about why “we” were dropping bombs on this far-away country—and could it really be true that we were doing this for the actual purpose of killing people?

I was 13 when the war ended in 1975, and it was a generation slightly older than I am who experienced the draft and the possibility of participating directly in the war. However, the war was a disturbing, mysterious background in my childhood and early teen years.

Two years ago when my wife, Julie Rosen, and I had the opportunity to visit Vietnam and Laos I hesitated, feeling some long-buried shame and anxiety arising in me. “They must just hate us,” I thought. What would it be like to visit North Vietnam, once our sworn enemy, and the target of our ferocious aggression? I cringed at the thought of looking people in the eye, knowing the role that our country had played.

As it turned out, the experience of visiting Vietnam two years ago had a huge impact on us. We were amazed at the generosity and warmth of the people we met on our visit. We happened to be here at the same time that President Obama visited the country. Ten thousand people turned out to welcome this American president, and it was overwhelming to see the excitement and

enthusiasm of people in Hanoi. I kept asking people some version of the same question: why are you so friendly to us? And I got the same answer again and again: We want to look forward, not back. We want the opportunity to grow and to thrive, and we won’t get there by looking backwards.

Five weeks into my experience as a Fulbright Scholar in Hanoi, I am more delighted than ever to be spending this time and doing this work in Vietnam. I am having wonderful professional opportunities, and also having so much fun and so many adventures meeting Vietnamese people and experiencing this beautiful country.

As a physician, my professional work is focused on treatment of addiction and on models of medical education. Vietnam, like the United States and most of the rest of the world, struggles with problems of addiction. Over the past decade they have begun to approach addiction as a disease, and offer evidence-based treatment. I have been wel-



comed by my colleagues at Hanoi Medical University as well as many other organizations involved in combatting addiction and HIV, such as USAID, the CDC, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and officials in the Vietnamese Ministry of Health. I feel very lucky to have the opportunity to contribute clinically, as an educator, as a researcher, and at a policy level. I have also received invitations to teach in Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand, and I hope to be able to take advantage of at least some of these opportunities while I am in the region.

The non-professional opportunities have

also been thrilling. During the Fulbright orientation Ms. Thu Huong emphasized to us that a major focus of the Fulbright program is cultural exchange and promoting understanding between the United States and Vietnam. We have taken this to heart, and we have been engaging in all kinds of wonderful experiences.

One highlight was a trip to Northern Vietnam two weeks ago to visit some Black Hmong tribal villages. We took an overnight train to Sapa, and then spent the day hiking through gorgeous landscapes of terraced rice paddies and hills with a very inspiring Hmong woman, Du, who was our guide.

We stopped at the home of her friends and helped to pre-



pare lunch for the 14 people who lived there, and then spent the night in Du’s house, where we got to know her four young kids. The Hmong still wear traditional indigo-dyed embroidered clothes, for the most part, and live in traditional homes where they cook over open-pit fires, many without plumbing and some without electricity. It was inspiring to see people living a life that is so much simpler than ours—so many fewer belongings, so much more socially connected with family and friends. It is a difficult way of life in many ways, but the Hmong people whom we met seemed generally friendly, happy, and quite satisfied with their lives.

It feels very good to be able to make a professional contribution to the Vietnamese people—in some small measure to be able to help with healing and reconciliation. It is also good to be reminded that there are so many ways to live a life, and that we can all make choices to savor, to simplify, and to connect more with the people around us.



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